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BASIC WATERFOWL REGULATIONS ANNOUNCED BY TUDOR

Hunters of wild ducks and geese can look forward to hunting seasons of approximately the same length and bag and possession limits as last year, Acting Secretary of the Interior Ralph A. Tudor said today in announcing the signing of the basic regulations by flyways for the 1954-55 migratory waterfowl hunting season.

Certain minor adjustments in shooting hours, season lengths, and bag and possession limits have been made, according to the Secretary, to compensate for some adverse reports from the northern breeding grounds. These reports indicate, on an over-all basis, that breeding populations this year will be slightly below last year but still above the 5-year average.

This portion of the over-all structure of the annual regulations, as released today, specified the length of the shooting seasons by flyways, bag and possession limits, and optional shooting hours, but does not include the specific season dates or shooting hours for the various States. Based on the number of days allotted to each flyway, the specific dates will be selected by State game administrators within a general framework of October 1 to January 10, 1955. This year an option is being permitted in all flyways extending the seasons as late as January 20. States choosing closing dates later than January 10 would be required to apply a penalty of two days for every one day the season is extended. The States also have the option of selecting shooting hours from one-half hour before sunrise to one hour before sunset, or until sunset. Woodcock and jacksnipe shooting, however, may continue until sunset. Shooting of all waterfowl on the opening day of the season, including each first day of the split seasons, will begin at 12 o'clock noon.

Although this year's regulations still permit the taking of one hooded merganser, it must be included in the regular bag and possession limits on other ducks. American and red-breasted mergansers are also to be included in the bag limits for other ducks.

The amended regulations for the coming season were signed by the Secretary in accordance with a law of Congress making effective the treaties relating to birds migrating between the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

Acting Secretary Tudor emphasized that the basic data used to guide Fish and Wildlife Service officials in making their decisions resulted from cooperative wintering-ground surveys and surveys on the waterfowl breeding grounds made by Service biologists and game management agents, State game department technicians, wildlife experts of the Canadian Wildlife Service, the Provincial Game Branches, and field personnel in Canada of Ducks Unlimited and the Wildlife Management Institute.

In the course of formulating regulations consideration was given also to the opinions and recommendations of the Director's Waterfowl Advisory Committee. This Committee is composed of delegates of the National Waterfowl Council, whose membership is constituted of directors of State game departments, and representatives of the National Audubon Society, the Outdoor Writers Association of America, the Izak Walton League of America, the Wildlife Management Institute, the National Wildlife Federation, the Wildlife Society and the International Association of Game, Fish and Conservation Commissioners.

Following is a summary of the highlights of the amended regulations by flyways:

Atlantic Flyway: For ducks, geese, coots, but not brant, woodcock, or jack-snipe, the States in this flyway of Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Vermont, Virginia, and West Virginia will have the same length of season as last year--60 consecutive days or two split seasons of 27 days each. Those States electing to extend their seasons as late as January 20 will take a penalty of two days for every one day the season is extended. For example, if the option of extending the season to January 15 is exercised, the season will run for 50 consecutive days; to January 20, for 40 consecutive days.

As last year, Long Island can, if it desires, have a season for waterfowl shooting which will conform to that of Connecticut or New Jersey.

Daily bag and possession limits on ducks remain at 4 and 8, except that the daily bag and possession limits will be increased to 8 and 16 in coastal tidal waters within the State of New Jersey and all States north and east thereof, providing such bags contain 4 and 8 scaup in the daily bag and possession limits, respectively. This has been done to permit a greater utilization of scaup.

For wood ducks a daily bag limit of one and a possession limit of two will be in effect.

Bag and possession limits on geese remain the same--two and four.

There will be a 30-day season on brant (an increase of 15 days) with a daily bag limit of six and possession of six, as last year.

Since no significant change in the woodcock population was noted in this flyway, the season of 40 days (beginning on or after October 1, 1954, and ending not later than the waterfowl season selected by the States) will remain the same as last year, with the same bag and possession limits of four and eight.

Coot bag and possession limits remain unchanged--10 and 10.

The 15-day jacksnipe season will continue, with bag and possession limits of eight.

Mississippi Flyway: For ducks (except wood ducks), geese, and coot, (but not woodcock or jacksnipe), the States in this flyway of Alabama, Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, Tennessee, and Wisconsin will have the same length of season as last year--55 consecutive days or two split seasons of 25 days each. (The same options prevail

as to extension of seasons beyond January 10, and closing hours, except in Alexander County, Illinois. A January 15 closing would shorten the season to 45 days; a January 20 closing, to 35 days).

Bag and possession limits for ducks and geese will be the same as last year--four and eight for ducks and five and five for geese.

The woodcock season will be 40 days (beginning on or after October 1 and closing not later than the close of the duck season which each State may select). Bag and possession limits of four and eight remain unchanged.

The season on wood ducks will be closed in this flyway because the population of this species appears to be declining.

Coot bag and possession limits remain unchanged--10 and 10.

The 15-day jacksnipe season will continue, with bag and possession limits of eight birds.

In Alexander County in Illinois, shooting hours for ducks, coots, and geese will be restricted to the period from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. in order to permit the geese to get out and feed after 3 p.m. That part of Alexander County established as a closed area by proclamation 2748 of October 1, 1947, still remains closed to goose shooting.

Central Flyway: For ducks, geese, and coots, but not for jacksnipe, the States in this flyway which include Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, and Wyoming, will have the same number of shooting days as last year--a 60-day straight season or two periods of 27 days each. (The same options as to closing hours and extension of season beyond January 10 will prevail. A January 15 closing would limit the season to 50 days; a January 20 closing, to 40 days.)

The same bag and possession limits for ducks and geese will be in effect--five and 10 for ducks, and five and five for geese. The daily bag and possession limit may include one wood duck only in most of these States.

The 15-day jacksnipe season will continue, with bag and possession limits of eight.

Coot bag and possession limits remain unchanged--10 and 10.

Woodcock shooting, permitted only in Oklahoma and eastern Texas, will have a 40-day season as last year, with the same bag and possession limits of four and eight.

Pacific Flyway: For ducks, geese, and coots, the States in this flyway of Arizona, California, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Washington have been given an 80-day consecutive season for two split periods of 36 days each. This is an increase of five days over last year's 75-day straight season. (The same options prevail as to closing hours and extension of season beyond January 10. A January 15 closing would limit the season to 70 days; a January 20 closing, to 60 days.)

This year all States in the flyway will have an option to choose a bag limit of ducks consisting of 10 a day or in possession, or nine daily with 15 in possession, providing that such bags contain not less than three widgeons or three pintails, or three in the aggregate of both kinds.

Bag and possession limits for geese remain at six birds, but such limit shall not include more than three of the dark species. For brant, in Oregon, California, and Washington, the season will remain the same as last year from December 1 to February 10, with bag and possession limits of three birds.

Bag and possession limits for coots in this flyway remain at 25.

The 15-day jacksnipe season remains unchanged, with bag and possession limits of eight and eight.

Bag limits on wood ducks remain unchanged.

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